

Message Text

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TAGS: FAO, EAGR

SUBJECT: DIRECTOR-GENERAL SAOUMA BRIEFS GENEVA GROUP ON HIS
REVIEW OF FAO PROGRAM AND BUDGET

SUMMARY: DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF FAO, EDOUARD SAOUMA, SPOKE TO GENEVA GROUP ON TUESDAY, MARCH 9, ON HIS PLANS FOR FAO AND MORE EXPLICITLY WHAT HE WOULD PROPOSE TO JULY FAO COUNCIL. SAOUMA EMPHASIZED NEED FOR FAO TO HAVE SHORTER TERM ACTION PROGRAM TO ASSIST MEMBER COUNTRIES PRODUCE MORE FOOD. THROUGH REDUCTIONS IN EXTANT FAO PROGRAMS BUT WITHOUT OUTRIGHT ELIMINATION OF ONGOING WORK, SAOUMA PLANS TO PROVIDE FUNDING OUT OF FAO REGULAR PROGRAM FOR SHORT TERM, HIGH IMPACT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM ADMINISTERED BY FAO COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVES. NOTING THIS WAS FIRST MEETING WITH PERM REPS ON HIS REVIEW OF FAO PROGRAM AND BUDGET, HE SOLICITED MEMBER STATE COMMENTS. WE BELIEVE USG SHOULD MAKE EARLY RESPONSE. END SUMMARY.

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1. FAO DIRECTOR-GENERAL SAOUMA ACCOMPANIED BY ROBERT SWIFT,

A CONSULTANT ON LOAN FROM AUSTRALIA FOR REVIEW OF THE FAO PROGRAM, STARTED BY DESCRIBING STATE OF FAO TODAY AND ITS 1976/77 PROGRAM AND BUDGET. HE POINTED OUT THAT 75 TO 80 PERCENT OF 170 MILLION DOLLAR FAO BIENNIUM BUDGET WENT FOR SALARIES OF STAFF. FAO CONSUMES 30 TONS OF PAPER AND SPENDS 11 PERCENT OF ITS BUDGET ON PAPER AND DOCUMENTS. 8 TO 9 PERCENT GOES INTO PAYING FOR 700 TO 1000 MEETINGS A YEAR, TRAVEL AND RENT. THIS LEAVES NOTHING FOR INVESTMENT IN AGRICULTURE IN MEMBER COUNTRIES IN REGULAR BUDGET. NEW 1976-77 BUDGET CALLS FOR 530 NEW POSTS, 104 UPGRADINGS, 414 MEETINGS IN 1976.

2. WITHOUT ELIMINATING ANY PROGRAM, DG WILL CUT BACK LONG TERM, ACADEMIC WORK WHICH IS NOW OVER HALF OF FAO PROGRAM. HE HAS SET NUMBER OF MEETINGS TO BE HELD IN 1976 AT ABOUT 160. HE HAS FROZEN ALL NEW APPOINTMENTS AND UPGRADINGS. HE DOES NOT PLAN TO CREATE FOUR REGIONAL MINI-FAO'S AS PRESENTLY PLANNED AS PART OF DECENTRALIZATION PROGRAM.

3. WITH THESE SAVINGS, HE WANTS TO SHIFT WORK TO SHORT TERM ACTION PROGRAMS OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NATURE THAT FAO CAN ADMINISTER IN MEMBER COUNTRIES. PRESENT SYSTEM OF UNDP AGRICULTURAL ATTACHES IS NOT SUFFICIENT, AND SAOUMA'S DECENTRALIZATION WILL BE TO LOCATE FAO REPRESENTATIVES IN COUNTRIES, NOT ALL COUNTRIES. THESE MEN WILL HAVE STANDING TO INFLUENCE COUNTRIES' AGRICULTURAL POLICY. THEY ALSO WILL BE ABLE TO PUT FORWARD FAO TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS -- SHORT TERM, ACTION AND PRODUCTION-ORIENTED. FAO REPRESENTATIVES IN COUNTRY WILL MAKE FAO FELT BY FARMERS IN COUNTRY. (NOTE: THIS EMPHASIS ON COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVES IS ALSO BEING MADE IN SAOUMA'S BRIEFING OF HIS STAFF.) SAOUMA INDICATED HE HAD ALREADY DISCUSSED THIS SHIFT TO FAO REPRESENTATIVES WITH MORSE OF UNDP AND NO MAJOR PROBLEMS WERE FORESEEN. SAOUMA DOES NOT WISH FAO TO REPLACE UNDP OR DIVORCE FAO FROM UNDP. HE FEELS THAT IT IS DANGEROUS TO BE COMPLETELY DEPENDENT ON ONE FUNDING SOURCE. FAO FUNDS FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE WILL GIVE FAO ABILITY TO INFLUENCE AGRICULTURAL POLICY, STRENGTHEN HAND OF COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVES, BE CRITICAL SEED MONEY FOR MUCH LARGER PROJECTS, AND COULD BE USED FOR EMERGENCY AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMS. OTHER UN AGENCIES HAVE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AS PART LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OF REGULAR BUDGET -- FOR EXAMPLE, WHO HAS \$131 MILLION AND WHO DG HAS \$3.2 MILLION AT HIS DISPOSAL FOR ASSISTANCE PROJECTS.

4. SAOUMA CITED USEFULNESS OF FAO INVESTMENT CENTER WHICH OVER YEARS HAS HELPED PLACE 5.5 BILLION DOLLARS OF INVESTMENT IN AGRICULTURAL PROJECTS. THIS SHOULD BE EXPANDED FROM ITS PRESENT STAFF OF ABOUT 60. FAO CAN CONTRIBUTE TECHNICAL EX-

PERTISE TO ASSIST EXISTING FUNDS TO INVEST IN AGRICULTURE. SAOUMA MENTIONED IFAD, KUWAIT FUND, AND INTERNAL GOVERNMENT INVESTMENT AND STRESSED INVESTMENT IN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT ONLY WAY TO MEET FORECAST GAP OF 85 TO 100 MILLION TONS OF CEREALS IN WORLD CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION OF FOOD PREDICTED BY 1985.

5. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS SAOUMA AND SWIFT DECLINED TO CITE SPECIFIC FIGURE FOR FAO TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AND SAID ACTUAL CRITERIA FOR SUCH GRANTS HAD NOT BEEN PREPARED YET. REVIEW IS STILL GOING ON AND THIS MEETING WITH GENEVA GROUP COUNTRIES IS FIRST INFORMAL DISCUSSION TO TELL MEMBER STATES WHERE REVIEW LOOKS LIKE IT IS HEADING AND SOLICITING COUNTRY VIEWS. SAOUMA EMPHASIZED HE WAS MAINTAINING PRIORITIES OF WORLD FOOD CONFERENCE. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CANNOT BE GIVEN ONLY TO POOREST COUNTRIES, BUT THEY SHOULD BE GIVEN PRIORITY. HE EMPHASIZED NEED FOR FAO TO GIVE GRASS ROOT TRAINING AND TO MAKE FAO FELT BY FARMERS. SAOUMA WAS CAUSTIC ABOUT IMPLEMENTING NEW INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ORDER WHICH HE DESCRIBED AS CATCHWORD. IN HIS OPINION ANY ASSISTANCE TO DEVELOPMENT OR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION MEETS THE NIEO CRITERIA. AMOUNTS OF MONEY SAOUMA IS TALKING ABOUT CANNOT SOLVE DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS, BUT IT WILL HELP PEOPLE.

COMMENT: WASHINGTON COMMENTS ON SAOUMA'S THINKING FOR THE FAO WOULD BE APPRECIATED BY SAOUMA. EVEN IF USG DOES NOT AGREE WITH SAOUMA'S POINTS, WE BELIEVE WE SHOULD SET RESPONSIVE PATTERN TO ASSURE USEFUL DIALOGUE WITH THE NEW FAO DG RATHER THAN WAIT UNTIL DIE IS CAST IN COUNCIL MEETINGS WHERE WE ARE ONLY ONE OF MANY COUNTRIES. VOLPE

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